

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION
FOR

Method and Apparatus for Distributing Authorization to Provision Mobile Devices on a
Wireless Network

INVENTORS:

Bruce K. Martin, Jr.
Robert T. Wang
Michael E. S. Luna

Prepared by:

BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP
12400 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD
SEVENTH FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90025
(408) 720-8300

Attorney's Docket No. 3399P042

"Express Mail" mailing label number EL617209236US

Date of Deposit July 11, 2001

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Julie Arango

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7-11-01

Method and Apparatus for Distributing Authorization to Provision Mobile Devices on a Wireless Network

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention pertains to techniques for provisioning devices on a wireless network. More particularly, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for distributing the authorization to provision mobile devices on a wireless network between multiple provisioning servers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Wireless network operators ("carriers") generally require capability to provision mobile devices that operate on their networks. "Provisioning" may be defined as dynamically and transparently providing a device with information which enables a service to be performed on the device (i.e., configuring the device). For example, a cellular telephone carrier may require the ability to program into cellular telephones that operate on its network, information such as network addresses (e.g., the home page of an Internet-enabled cellular telephone), user preferences (e.g., user bookmark Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)), and privileges (e.g., email account ID and password). This process is normally performed by a provisioning server operated by the wireless carrier, in cooperation with software on the mobile device. The provisioning server typically is a conventional server-class computer system that is coupled to the wireless network. An example of such a provisioning server is one which executes the Openwave Provisioning Manager (OPM), available from Openwave

Systems Inc. of Redwood City, California. The software on the mobile device may be a browser in the mobile device (sometimes called a "browser" or "minibrowser" in a mobile device), such as the UP.Browser of Openwave Systems. In conjunction with the UP.Browser, the OPM has the ability to provision a mobile device, such as a cellular telephone, remotely over the air via a wireless network.

[0003] It is desirable to control the ability to provision mobile devices to prevent unauthorized provisioning. This goal is especially important now that cellular telephones and other wireless devices have the ability to access the Internet. The Internet potentially provides an access channel to the mobile devices for millions of users, some of whom could attempt to use this channel to perform unauthorized provisioning of mobile devices. Accordingly, a wireless carrier normally operates a provisioning server within a secure ("trusted") environment, using a conventional firewall, for example.

[0004] Before a provisioning server can modify mobile device configuration information, including configuration pertaining to both device and browser layer, the provisioning server must be recognized as the trusted provisioning domain (TPD) by the mobile device. Currently, mobile devices can only recognize one trusted provisioning domain. Consequently, all provisioning commands must come from the same provisioning server, i.e. the one identified by mobile device as the TPD. As the application and usage of wireless Internet grows, however, wireless carriers will need to have the flexibility to allow third parties outside the carrier's firewall, such as

application and content providers, to initiate provisioning events, without compromising the security of mobile devices. For example, it may be desirable to enable Internet portals to provision mobile devices with users' personal contact lists (e.g., names, addresses, etc.), or to enable Internet service providers (ISPs) to program network addresses into mobile devices. Previously, however, there has been no solution which allows these actions to be done without compromising security.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention includes a method and apparatus to allow the provisioning of multiple processing devices on a network. In the method, a first provisioning system authorized to provision a processing device on the network is operated within a trusted environment. The first provisioning system is used to authorize a second provisioning system outside the trusted environment to provision the processing device.

[0006] Other features of the present invention will be apparent from the accompanying drawings and from the detailed description which follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings, in which like references indicate similar elements and in which:

[0008] Figure 1 illustrates a network environment in which the present invention may be implemented;

[0009] Figure 2 is a block diagram showing an abstraction of a mobile device and a trusted provisioning domain (TPD);

[0010] Figure 3 is a flow diagram illustrating a process of provisioning a mobile device, according to one embodiment of the present invention; and

[0011] Figure 4 is a flow diagram illustrating a process which may be performed by the browser in a mobile device in response to receiving a Mobile Management Command (MMC) document.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] A method and apparatus are described, for distributing the authorization to provision mobile devices on a wireless network between multiple provisioning servers, which may operate in different "trusted environments". Note that in this description, references to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" mean that the feature being referred to is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Further, separate references to "one embodiment" in this description do not necessarily refer to the same embodiment; however, neither are such embodiments mutually exclusive, unless so stated and except as will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. For example, a feature, structure, act, etc. described in one embodiment may also be included in other embodiments. Thus, the present invention can include any variety of combinations and/or integrations of the embodiments described herein.

[0013] Described herein is a technique that will support multiple trusted provisioning domains (TPDs) for mobile devices and provide a solution to allow wireless carriers to control and distribute provisioning authorization without compromising security. As described in greater detail below, a primary TPD includes one or more provisioning servers that operate within a trusted environment on the wireless network and can provision the mobile devices. The primary TPD may distribute authorization to provision mobile devices to one or more secondary TPDs, each of which includes one or more provisioning servers operates outside the trusted environment. Any of the secondary TPDs may operate on a network other than the wireless network. Digital

signatures based on public key encryption can be used by any of the provisioning servers for increased security when provisioning the mobile devices.

[0014] The embodiments described herein are based on a usage model in which provisioning authorization is hierarchical, i.e. a primary provisioning server delegates provisioning authorization one or more secondary provisioning servers. Note, however, that other types of usage models may be used; for example, provisioning authorization could be distributed among peered provisioning servers.

[0015] Refer now to Figure 1, which illustrates a network environment in which the present invention can be implemented. As shown, a number (N) of mobile devices 1-1 through 1-N operate on a wireless network 2. The wireless devices 1 may include any of various types of mobile devices, such as cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), notebook (laptop) computers, or the like. In the illustrated embodiment, the wireless network 2 is coupled through a link server 4 to another network (or internetwork) 3. Network 3 may be, for example, the Internet, a corporate intranet, a wide area network (WAN), a local area network (LAN), or a combination thereof. A short message service center (SMSC) 8 is coupled to the link server 4 and to the wireless network 2.

[0016] The link server 4 uses conventional techniques to enable communication between devices on wireless network 2 and devices on network 3. For example, if the network 3 is the Internet, the link server 4 may include a wireless access protocol (WAP) gateway; that is, link server 4 performs conversion and/or translation between the

languages and protocols used by devices on the Internet, such as hypertext markup language (HTML) and hypertext transport protocol (HTTP), and the languages and protocols used by the wireless devices, such as wireless markup language (WML) and WAP. An example of such a device is the Mobile Access Gateway, available from Openwave Systems. The link server 4 may also perform other functions which are not germane to the present invention. The link server 4 may be owned and/or operated by the operator of the wireless network 2 (the wireless carrier), although that is not necessarily the case.

[0017] Assuming a hierarchical provisioning system for purposes of this description, a primary TPD 5 is coupled to the link server 4. The primary TPD 5, which includes one or more provisioning servers, controls the privileges of all other TPDs, referred to as secondary TPDs 6. Each of the secondary TPDs 6 also includes one or more provisioning servers. The primary TPD 5 may be owned and/or operated by the wireless carrier, although that is not necessarily the case. The primary TPD 5 may be implemented using, for example, the OPM of Openwave Systems.

[0018] In embodiments represented in Figure 1, the carrier's firewall establishes a trusted ("secure") environment 7 that includes the mobile devices 1, the link server 4, and the primary TPD 5 (and possibly other processing systems operated by the carrier), but excludes network 3 and all devices which are directly coupled to it. As shown in Figure 1, the devices coupled to network 3 include one or more secondary TPDs 6-1 through 6-M. Although not shown as such in Figure 1, a secondary TPD 6 might

alternatively be coupled directly to the wireless network 2 or elsewhere, but still outside the carrier's trusted environment 7. Similarly, in other embodiments a primary TPD 5 might be coupled directly to the wireless network 2 and/or directly to network 3, yet still inside the carrier's trusted environment 7.

[0019] Prior to the present invention, mobile devices could only recognize one TPD. Consequently, all provisioning commands were required to be originated from the same TPD. The techniques described herein allow authorization to provision mobile devices to be granted to one or more secondary TPDs 6, which may be outside the primary TPD's trusted environment 7, without compromising security. The provisioning authorization may be granted by the primary TPD 5 to the secondary TPDs 6 or by any other trusted source. The provisioning authorization granted to a secondary TPD 6 can be limited to a specified scope. For example, a secondary TPD 6 operated by an Internet portal might be granted only the authorization to configure specified mobile devices with their users' contact lists. As another example, a secondary TPD 6 operated by an ISP might be granted only the authorization to program Internet Protocol (IP) addresses into specified mobile devices.

[0020] Further, the described techniques can also be applied to allow a secondary TPD 6, once it is authorized to provision a mobile device 1, to delegate some or all of its provisioning authority to one or more other secondary TPDs 6. This principle may be extended to allow successive delegation of provisioning authority down a delegation "chain" containing essentially any number of secondary TPDs 6. In an embodiment

which allows such delegation, a secondary TPD 6 can delegate authority to provision only the parameters which it is authorized to provision itself. The ability to delegate provisioning authority may be a parameter which is provisioned by the primary TPD 5 or by any TPD from which the TPD attempting to delegate received its provisioning authority (either directly or indirectly).

[0021] Figure 2 shows a high-level abstraction of a mobile device 1 and a provisioning server 30, according to one embodiment. Provisioning server 30 represents any provisioning server in either a primary TPD 5 or a secondary TPD 6. The mobile device 1 includes a processor 21, as well as a memory 22 and a data communication device 28 coupled to processor 21. The provisioning server 30 includes a processor 25 as well as a memory 26 and a data communication device 29 coupled to processor 25. Of course, both the mobile device 1 and the provisioning server 30 may also include other components not shown, such as: input/output (I/O) devices, additional storage devices, buses and/or adapters, etc. The details of such other components are not necessary for understanding the present invention and are well-known to those skilled in the art. Each of the processors 21 and 25 may be, or may include, one or more general- or special-purpose microprocessors, digital signal processors (DSPs), application specific integrated circuits (ASICs), programmable logic devices (PLDs), or the like, or a combination of such devices. Each of memories 23 and 26 may be, for may include, random access memory (RAM), flash or read-only memory (ROM) (which may be programmable), one or more non-volatile mass storage devices (e.g., magnetic disk,

CD-ROM, DVD), or the like, or a combination of such devices. Each of the data communication devices 28 and 29 may be, or may include, a wireless transceiver (particularly device 28 in mobile device 1), a conventional or broadband modem, an Ethernet adapter, or the like.

[0022] The memory 26 of the provisioning server 30 includes application software (“provisioning application”) 27 executable by the processor 25 to provision the mobile device 1, which may include granting provisioning authorization to other TPDs. The provisioning application 27 communicates provisioning requests and parameters to the mobile device 1, as described further below. The memory 22 of the mobile device 1 stores a browser 23, which includes a Mobile Management Command (MMC) module 24. Except as otherwise described herein, browser 23 is a conventional browser for a mobile device, such as the Openwave UP.Browser. The MMC module 24 is a component (e.g., a process) of the browser 23 which manages the provisioning transaction protocol, decomposes the provisioning content, and performs the requested provisioning operations in the mobile device 1. In other embodiments, provisioning could be managed in the mobile device 1 by an entity other than the browser 23, such as a separate provisioning application in the mobile device 1, which may also be stored in memory 22.

[0023] In the illustrated embodiment, the MMC module 24 is given control by the browser 23 whenever any data received by the browser 23 is determined to be or contain an MMC document. An MMC document is an extensible markup language

(XML) document that contains commands that specify the name and contents of parameters ("MMC objects") to write or the name of parameters to read.

[0024] Provisioning of a mobile device 1 is accomplished by writing one or more MMC objects in the mobile device 1. The browser 23 in the mobile device 1 is configured to recognize MMC objects, which are parameters of the browser 23 or registers of the mobile device 1, and which may be included in an MMC document. One of the MMC objects, browser:domain.trusted, stores the definition (e.g., the URL) of the primary TPD 5. One way to provision the primary TPD 5 in a mobile device 1 is by writing the object browser:domain.trusted in the mobile device 1. Alternatively, the primary TPD can be set using other techniques, such as by a custom Wireless Session Protocol (WSP) heading during session initiation between the mobile device 1 and the link server 4, by pre-provisioning it in the mobile device or in a subscriber identity module (SIM), or by another trusted network element, such as the link server 4.

[0025] When the mobile device 1 retrieves a document from an origin server (e.g., a TPD), the browser 23 determines whether the document is an MMC document. An MMC document normally contains one or more MMC objects. The browser 23 automatically recognizes an MMC document based on a document type identifier in the header of the document. If the retrieved document is an MMC document, the browser 23 checks the document source against browser:domain.trusted to verify the provisioning privilege, i.e. to verify the origin server is in fact the TPD.

[0026] Note that in other embodiments, a provisioning message can be recognized by a mobile device 1 using other techniques, particularly if provisioning is handled in the mobile device 1 by an entity other than the browser 23. As one example, a mobile device 1 might consider any messages that are on a predetermined network "port" to be provisioning messages.

[0027] In addition to the above-mentioned MMC object, two other types of MMC objects can be written in a mobile device 1, designated browser:domain..<p>.trusted and browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name, which the browser 23 in the mobile device 1 is designed to recognize, and which contains provisioning privileges of any secondary TPDs 6 and the MMC objects they are privileged to provision. Both p and c in these objects are variables, each representing an array. For example, browser:domain..<l>.trusted can represent provisioning server 6-1 in Figure 1, browser:domain..<2>.trusted can represent provisioning server 6-2, and so forth. The set of objects browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name are the MMC objects that provisioning server p has authorization to provision. For example, browser:domain..<l>.object..<c>.name can represent the MMC objects that provisioning server 6-1 has authorization to provision. Each value of browser:domain..<p>.trusted is a text value which is fully qualified domain name. Each value of browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name is a text value which is the name of an MMC object, e.g. "browser:email.ipaddress".

[0028] The MMC objects may be written to a mobile device 1 by including them in an MMC document, which is sent from a provisioning server to the mobile device 1 via the link server 4, using WAP. When provisioning is performed by the primary TPD 5, it may include distributing authorization to provision the mobile device 1 to one or more secondary TPDs 6. Distributing authorization to provision a mobile device 1 is normally accomplished by the primary TPD 5 specifying values of the object browser:domain..<p>.trusted to define one or more secondary TPDs 6, and specifying values of the object browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name to define the specific provisioning authorities for each browser:domain..<p>.trusted. A particular secondary TPD 6 may be given limited provisioning authorization, which may or may not coincide with the provisioning authorization of the primary TPD 5 or any other secondary TPD 6. In one embodiment, only the primary TPD 5 can modify browser:domain..<p>.trusted and browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name objects. This approach allows separate management and modification of each secondary TPD 6. As noted above, the provisioning authorization granted to a secondary TPD 6 may include the authorization for the secondary TPD 6 to delegate some or all of its provisioning authority to other secondary TPDs 6.

[0029] Figure 3 shows a process of provisioning a mobile device 1, according to one embodiment, which may be initiated by either the primary TPD 5 or a secondary TPD 6. The initial stage of the provisioning process is to establish the initial set of conditions in the mobile device 1, such that the TPD is known to the mobile device 1 and parameter

provision can begin. Thus, at block 301 an authorized TPD (primary TPD 5 or an authorized secondary TPD 6) generates and sends a provisioning notification message to the link server 4, to initiate the process of establishing a session with the mobile device 1. Next, at block 302 the link server 4 forwards the provisioning notification message to the SMSC 8, which sends the provisioning notification message to the mobile device 1 at block 303 as an SMS message over the wireless network 2 using conventional techniques. The SMS message begins with a set of predetermined characters (e.g., "//PP"), previously programmed into the mobile device 1, to allow the mobile device 1 to identify the message as a provisioning notification message for establishing a provisioning session.

[0030] Thus, at block 304 the mobile device 1 receives the SMS provisioning notification message, identifies it as such, and passes it to the browser 23. The browser 23 responds to the provisioning notification message by establishing a secure WSP session with the link server 4 at block 305. This may be accomplished in any of several ways. For example, a home page service in the link server 4 may serve as an entry point for the remainder of the provisioning process. If, however, the link server 4 is a standard WAP gateway without a homepage service, the provisioning notification message may provide a homepage URL that the browser 23 contacts to commence the operational stage.

[0031] Hence, after establishing the connection, at block 306 the browser 23 sends a request for an MMC document to the TPD over the wireless network 2 via the link

server 4. The request is sent as an HTTP GET message. At block 307 the TPD sends the MMC document to the link server 4. At block 308 the link server 4 compiles the XML based MMC document into a WAP Binary XML (WBXML) document and sends it to the mobile device 1 over the wireless network 2. At block 309 the mobile device 1 receives the compiled MMC document, where the browser 23 parses the document and causes the mobile device 1 to store the provisioned parameters (MMC objects) as specified in the document. The parameters may be stored in, for example, programmable ROM (e.g., flash memory) in the mobile device 1. Before causing the parameters to be stored, however, the browser 23 confirms that the source TPD is authorized to provision the specified parameters, the process of which is described further below. Next, at block 310 the browser 23 returns the result (status) of the provisioning operation (e.g., "OK" in the event of success or "Error" in the event of failure) to the link server 4 using an WSP or HTTP POST message. The link server 4 then forwards the result to the TPD at block 311, using HTTP POST.

[0032] Figure 4 illustrates a process which may be performed by the browser 23 in the mobile device 1 in response to receiving and MMC document. At block 401 the MMC module 24 in the browser 23 receives and parses the MMC document. At block 402 the MMC module 24 determines whether the source of the MMC document matches the object, browser:domain.trusted. If there is a match, then the process branches to block 405, in which the MMC module 24 causes the mobile device 1 to store the parameters (MMC objects) specified by the MMC document. At block 406 (or block 310 in Figure 3)

the browser 23 returns the completion result to the link server 4. If no match is found at block 402, the MMC module 24 determines at block 403 whether the source of the MMC document matches any browser:domain..<p>.trusted value previously provisioned in the mobile device 1.

[0033] If a match is found at block 403, then the MMC module 24 determines at block 404 whether each browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name value specified in the MMC document is valid for the matching browser:domain..<p>.trusted value, according to the previous provisioning. If each such object is determined to be valid, the process continues from block 405 as described above. If no match is found at block 403, or if a specified browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name object is determined not to be valid for this source (browser:domain..<p>.trusted) at block 404, then the browser 23 returns a rejection message to the link server 4 at block 407.

[0034] A similar verification process may be performed in the mobile device 1 in response to a request to read an MMC object. Of course many variations upon the foregoing process and the process of Figure 3 are possible. For example, if some but not all of the browser:domain..<p>.object..<c>.name values specified in the MMC document are valid for the source (browser:domain..<p>.trusted), it may be desirable to provision the valid value in the mobile device 1, rather than rejecting the entire provisioning request. Hence, the browser 23 may be configured to perform accordingly.

[0035] Assume, for example, that the goal of a particular provisioning operation is for a secondary TPD 6 with the domain name, provision.someisp.com, to be given the authorization to provision the IP address, user name, and password of an email account for a mobile device 1. Assume further that these parameters are defined in the mobile device 1 as the MMC objects, browser:email.ipaddress, browser:email.username, and browser:email.password, respectively. To authorize the secondary TPD 6 to provision these parameters on the mobile device 1, the primary TPD 5 could send the mobile device 1 an MMC document as follows:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
  <mmc status-uri="http://prov.carrier.net/">
    <method
      id="1"
      name="write"
      object="browser:domain..<1>.trusted"
      value="provsvr.someisp.com"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
    <method
      id="2"
      name="write"
      object="browser:domain..<1>.object..<1>.name"
      value="browser:email.ipaddress"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
    <method
      id="3"
      name="write"
      object="browser:domain..<1>.object..<2>.name"
      value="browser:email.username"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
    <method
      id="4"
```

```

name="write"
object="browser:domain..<1>.object..<3> .name"
value="browser:email.password"
Reportstatus="TRUE" />

```

```
</mmc>
```

[0036] A secondary TPD 6 provisions a mobile device 1 in essentially the same manner as the primary TPD 5 provisions the mobile device 1, i.e. by specifying the appropriate MMC objects and their values in an MMC document and the appropriate command (e.g., "write"). For example, to provision the above-mentioned email account information of a mobile device 1, a secondary TPD 6 could send the mobile device 1 an MMC document as follows:

```

<?xml version="1.0"?>
  <mmc status-uri="http://prov.carrier.net/">
    <method
      id="1"
      name="write"
      object="browser:email.ipaddress"
      value="125.45.135.190"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
    <method
      id="2"
      name="write"
      object="browser:email.username"
      value="jd200l"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
    <method
      id="4"
      name="write"
      object="browser:email.password"
      value="guesswhoiam"
      Reportstatus="TRUE" />
  </mmc>

```

[0037] In response to a provisioning request, a mobile device 1 sends to the source of the provisioning request an MMC document indicating the result of the request. For the above example, such a document might appear as follows:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
  <mmc>
    <status mmc="OK">
      <detail id="1"
              name="write"
              object="browser:email.ipaddress"
              result="OK" />

      <detail id="2"
              name="write"
              object="browser:email.username"
              result="OK"
    </status>
  </mmc>
```

[0038] It may be assumed that each TPD 5 or 6 is capable of generating an MMC document in response to human inputs specifying MMC objects and their values, and is also capable of transmitting the MMC document to a mobile device 1. Referring again to Figure 2, such capability is provided in the provisioning software 27 that executes on each TPD and provides a user interface appropriate for these tasks. The process of generating an MMC document can be implemented in any of various degrees of automation. The details of generating an MMC document and the extent of such automation are not necessary for an understanding of the present invention.

[0039] As indicated above, security is a significant concern when provisioning authority is granted to secondary TPDs outside the carrier's trusted domain.

Consequently, digital signatures based on public key encryption may be used to carry

out secure provisioning of mobile devices 1. The digital signature technique allows a TPD to digitally “sign” a provisioning request. The mobile device 1 to be provisioned uses the “certificate” of the TPD, which includes the TPD’s public key, to decrypt and/or verify the authenticity of the provisioning message. The certificates are normally acquired from a trusted source, which performs any well-known, conventional form of validation before distributing them to a TPD.

[0040] Hence, in one embodiment, a separate MMC object, browser:domain.certificate, is used by the primary TPD 5 to provision its certificate in a mobile device 1. Another MMC object, browser:domain.<p>.certificate, is used by the primary TPD 5 to provision certificates of one or more secondary TPDs 6 in a mobile device 1 (where p is an array variable as described above). Generally, it will be desirable for the primary TPD 5 not to allow a secondary TPD 6 to provision its own certificate, for security reasons.

[0041] A potential alternative to public key encryption is to use symmetric key (also known as secret key or shared secret) encryption. However, symmetric key encryption is considered undesirable for this purpose. For optimum security, every mobile device should be assigned a different cryptographic key; yet assigning a different key to each mobile device complicates key management operations. Alternatively, some or all mobile devices might use the same key in a symmetric key system, which could compromise security. Hence, public key encryption is considered to be a superior

solution, since it is more economical to distribute certificates than to store keys for a large number of mobile devices.

[0042] Thus, a method and apparatus have been described, for distributing the authorization to provision mobile devices on a wireless network between multiple provisioning servers, which may operate in different environments of trust. Although the present invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments, it will be evident that various modifications and changes may be made to these embodiments without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the claims. Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative sense rather than a restrictive sense.